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THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

BY BARTOLOME ESTEBAN MURILLO, SPANISH, 1617-1682

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. K. T. Keller, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie H. Green and
Mr. and Mrs. Robert N. Green, 1948



THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT (DETAIL)
BY BARTOLOME ESTEBAN MURILLO, SPANISH, 1617-1682
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MURILLO'S FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

Taste changes, as one generation succeeds another and the world is seen from an altered point of view. The great names in Spanish painting—El Greco, Velázquez, Ribera, Murillo, Zurbarán, Goya—like the planets in the sky of another season, have changed their position since the nineteenth century and are now looked for in another quarter. The nineteenth century, which was fond of sweetness of sentiment, was immensely fond of Murillo's late works in his *estilo vaporoso*—his *Immaculate Conceptions* and his beggar children—which are now grown too sweet for our taste, accustomed to more tart and acrid flavors. We have instead discovered other phases of Murillo to admire which played little part in the idolatry of the nineteenth century. His landscapes and his grave and dignified portraits, though rare, now seem an essential part of his reputation. But chiefly it is his gift for narrative composition and his vivid Spanish realism, shown in his early work while he was still under the spell of his study of Velázquez, Ribera and Rubens, which today sustain his reputation for greatness.

A monumental altarpiece of *The Flight into Egypt*, given to our museum by Mr. and Mrs. K. T. Keller, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie H. Green and Mr. and Mrs. Robert N. Green, is one of the masterpieces of Murillo's early years. The vivid narrative

power of the composition, the intense dramatic realism of the figures, the strong and unaffected poetry of feeling shown in the artist's interpretation of the subject, mark it as a high point of Murillo's imaginative power; as the force of the light and shadow, and the luminosity of the warm brown color harmony make it a high point of what the Spaniards called his *estilo calido* or warm style. (The *Two Monks* in the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, a cold, leaden and somberly impressive picture, is a good example of his earliest *estilo frio* or cold style, while a large altarpiece of *St. Thomas of Villanueva as a Child* in the Emery collection, Cincinnati Art Museum, is perhaps the best example of the *estilo vaporoso* or vaporous style, in this country.)

The color scheme of the altarpiece is both striking and simple. The Madonna is dressed in the traditional colors of rose and blue. The Child in her arms is wrapped in swaddling bands of yellow, white and dark green linen, the white linen cloth forming a kind of halo of light around the baby's head. Around this luminous focus of primary colors the composition is developed in broad, handsome harmonies of brown. The force of the lighting and sharp contrast of shadows shows still the influence of the Tenebrists like Ribera and of Zurbarán, his predecessor in Seville. But the composition, so gracious and human, so easy in movement, so convincing in sentiment, is altogether characteristic of Murillo.

No one can but be struck by the dramatic reality of the figures. Murillo retained the medieval spirit of telling his story in a clear and telling manner, although without any of the supernatural imagery of medieval art. The steady plodding gait of the donkey, the mother's absorption in her sleeping baby, the anxious responsibility of Joseph, are represented, with true Spanish realism, in terms of the Andalusian peasant life from which the artist himself sprang. Every detail has the authentic character of first-hand experience, ennobled yet lifelike. It is not surprising that an art at once so convincing and so pleasing should have won for Murillo a great and enduring popularity.

Murillo spent his life in painting monumental decorative works. He was one of the masters of the baroque decorative style—grand in scale, monumental in design, painted to have great carrying power and to be effective seen at the end of an architectural vista, yet, when seen at close range, convincing in its naturalness, warmth and simple reality. These are very difficult qualities to combine. In this *Flight into Egypt* they are achieved in a coloristic style characterized by great richness of tone, subtlety and freshness of hue, and precision of drawing. The narrative power of the picture is so great that one involuntarily sees it first as a human drama; but as one looks at it again one realizes the extraordinary gifts Murillo had as a painter. In this country he is largely a name and a vague reputation. Here is an example of his powers as an artist that makes one realize the justness of his fame.

Another version of the *Flight into Egypt* exists, which was painted about 1648 for the Merced Calzada and was carried off by Marshal Soult, the French commander in the Peninsular War of 1808-11, who sold it for 51,500 francs; it is now in the Palazzo Bianco, Genoa. Our picture, which the catalogue of the London

Exhibition of Seventeenth Century Art in Europe, 1938 (no. 229) describes as "an improved variant," seems, if one may trust a reproduction of the Genoa picture, somewhat earlier. It has a crispness of outline and realism of detail, which are replaced in the Genoa painting by a more vaporous style and sentimental cast of the figures. St. Joseph, in particular, in the Detroit altarpiece is superior in seriousness and sincerity of feeling to his counterpart in Genoa. The Detroit picture is signed on a rock in the right foreground, *Bme Murillo f.*, but not dated.

The picture was bought in the 1750's by an English collector, Sir Samson Gideon, and remained in the possession of his descendants until two years ago. The probability is that it came directly from Spain to Sir Samson Gideon's collection and that it was brought rolled, for it was framed in a magnificent English Chippendale frame that must have been made for it in London in the middle of the eighteenth century. This frame, although rather secular in effect for the picture, is a superb example of the English eighteenth century decorative art and is, moreover, an interesting part of the picture's history.

For the taste of the nineteenth century, as I have said, the early works of Murillo were too vigorously realistic. W. Bürger, the great French scholar, who saw our picture in the mid-nineteenth century, described it in *Trésors d'art en Angleterre* (1865) as "*dans la manière la plus rude et la plus contrastée, mais excellent*". To our eyes it is infinitely more appealing in its simple and touching sincerity than the late works which Bürger's generation preferred. It, and the large late altarpiece in Cincinnati, are certainly the two great monuments of Murillo's power as a painter that have come to America.

E. P. RICHARDSON

Acc. no. 48.96. Canvas: H. 81¾; W. 61½ inches. Signed on a rock in the right foreground: *Bme. Murillo f.* Gift of Mr. and Mrs. K. T. Keller, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie H. Green and Mr. and Mrs. Robert N. Green, 1948.

Collections: Sir Samson Gideon; Lord Eardley; Lord Saye and Selle, London; Sir Culling Eardley; Mrs. Culling Hanbury; Sir Francis Fremantle.

References: *The English Connoisseur*, I, 1766, p. 14; British Institution, 1822, no. 125; 1845, no. 50; Waagen, *Art Treasures* . . . , II, p. 341; Manchester, *Art Treasures*, 1857, no. 643; British Institution, 1862, no. 16; W. Bürger, *Trésors d'art en Angleterre*, Paris, 1865, p. 129; London, Royal Academy, 1871, no. 128; London, Royal Academy, 1902, no. 93; Curtis, no. 127.

A TURKISH VELVET HANGING

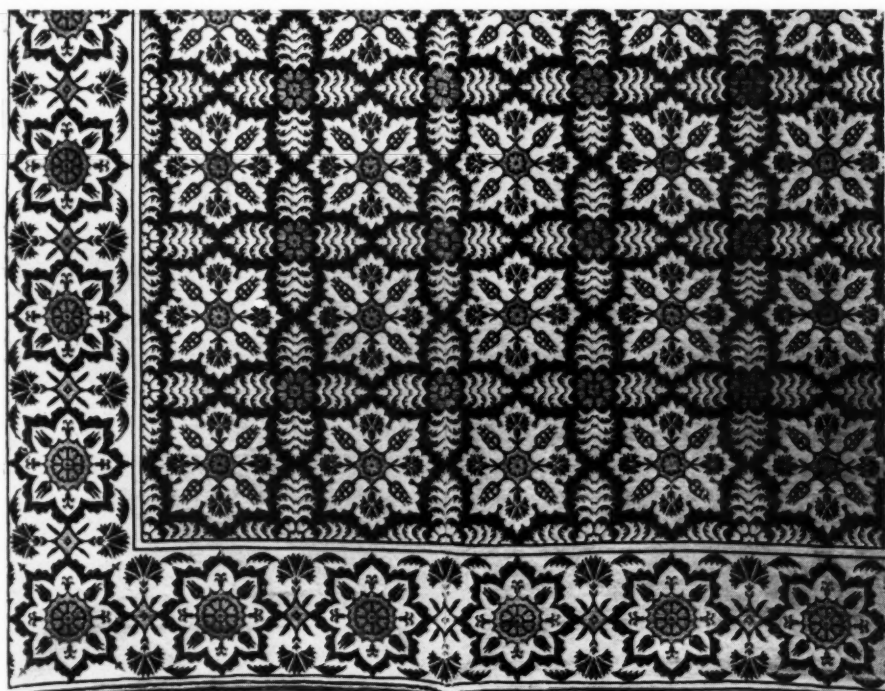
The gift of a wonderful polychrome velvet hanging by Mr. and Mrs. Eugene H. Welker adds luster and elegance to the galleries of Mohammedan art.

It is a complete piece, woven in four widths, with a border on all sides. On a ground of white satin there are one hundred and ninety star motives of tulips and carnations, separated by cross-motives of trees emanating from rosettes. The border has octagonal floral motives overlaid with large rosettes, tulips and hyacinths; these are separated by double carnations. No black and white reproduction can even indicate the splendor of the color scheme, red and blue for the velvet, soft untarnished

gold for the central rosettes. The unusual size of the cover or hanging, almost five and a half yards in length by nearly three yards in width, makes it plausible that this fine velvet was woven for the sultan's personal use at a court factory, probably at Brusa, the old capital of the Ottoman Turks.

The hanging is unusually well preserved and has an extraordinary pedigree. Until 1918 it was preserved in the villa Doria-Pamphili at Rome, cherished by generation after generation of the Princes Doria as a legacy from their famous ancestor, Andrea Doria (1466-1560), censor in perpetuo of the Republic of Genoa and admiral-condottiere in the service of the emperor Charles V (1500-1558). As a free-lance condottiere Andrea Doria himself owned a small fleet of fast galleys. The one reserved for his personal use, the *Capitana*, was sumptuously decorated. The sculptured parts were the work of Matteo Castellino, walls and ceilings were painted by Agostino Calvi and it was richly adorned with fine textiles, rugs, hangings and cushions. On special occasions even the oarsmen were accoutred in crimson velvet.

Besides its attractiveness to the eye, the *Capitana* was built for comfort. This explains the fact that the emperor Charles V, an addict to gastronomic indiscretion, preferred it to his own magnificent but clumsy state galley, from the time when Doria became his admiral. Again and again Andrea Doria came from Genoa



POLYCHROME VELVET (DETAIL)
TURKISH, EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene H. Welker, 1948

to Barcelona to take his august patron here and there. A real friendship existed between the two men, based on mutual respect and understanding. Andrea Doria had made his name famous all over the Mediterranean by his unceasing pursuance of his life's aim. He was the representative of all Christianity, waging war against the Ottoman Turks in the name of civilization. His personal adversary was Khair-Eddin, surnamed Barbarossa, admiral of the Mediterranean fleet of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, and dreaded chief of the Barbary corsairs.

The emperor and Andrea Doria met for the first time in the summer of 1530. Charles then decided to travel to Italy on his admiral's galley, as a special mark of confidence. On his arrival in Genoa, he further honored Doria by accepting his hospitality and remaining his guest in his city palace for six weeks. In return Doria received that most coveted of orders, the Golden Fleece, and the principality of Melfi.

In March, 1533, he again played host to the emperor. This occasion was marked by a magnificent banquet on the *Capitana* which was at anchor in the harbor of Genoa, to the emperor and his suite of one thousand men. It was probably at this occasion that a throne for the emperor was set up in the reception hall of the galley; this throne was backed by the sumptuous velvet hanging here described. Since such hangings were not made for the open market, but merely for the use of the sultan, Doria may have acquired it as part of his prize when he seized the castles which guarded the entrance to the gulf of Lepanto, in 1532. This happened during his campaign in the eastern Mediterranean, which he had launched successfully in order to force Sultan Suleiman to desist from the siege of Vienna. Tradition has preserved a fairytale account of the banquet on the *Capitana*, where the musicians and singers were dressed up as marine deities and where the magnificent silver dishes were thrown into the sea after the repast. Needless to say, a net had been spread beneath the water and they were fished up safely after the guests had left.

Doria took the emperor back to Barcelona. Thence he sailed in pursuit of Khair-Eddin, self-styled king of Algiers, the headquarters and stronghold of the Barbary pirates. In 1534 Khair-Eddin seized Tunis for Suleiman, in his capacity of capitan pasha. Charles V intervened; his Tunisian expedition has been immortalized in a set of tapestries, designed by Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen who accompanied the Emperor as staff artist. Doria commanded, besides his own fleet of twenty-two galleys, the ten vessels sent by pope Paul III. Tunis was taken, but Khair-Eddin escaped. This entailed the luckless expedition to Algiers, undertaken against the warning of Doria, who however succeeded in saving the emperor and his escort on board the *Capitana*.

Seven times at least Charles V had been the admiral's guest; and twice, in 1548 and 1551, Doria played host to prince Philip. The emperor's death in 1558 was followed by the death of Doria, ninety-four years of age, in 1560. The emperor's throne with the velvet hanging may have remained in place on the *Capitana* during the life of Gianandrea, grandnephew and heir of Andrea Doria.

At an unknown time, probably in the seventeenth century when Prince Camillo

Doria commissioned Alessandro Algardi to build for him a villa on the Gianicolo hill, the velvet hanging was taken to Rome. Today, standing before it, watching the play of the light on the beautiful red and blue velvet, the shimmering changes of the gold on the soft white satin of the background, one wishes that the hanging would speak, tell its adventurous story to the spellbound beholder.

ADELE COULIN WEIBEL

Acc. no. 48.137. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Eugene H. Welker. Length 193 inches; width 105½ inches. Preservation excellent. Passed from the collection of the Princes Doria to that of Giorgio Sangiorgi in 1918.

FOUR MEZZOTINTS *by* DAVID LUCAS

Mr. C. Edmund Delbos within the year has presented to the Print Department, from his distinguished private collection, a choice assortment of thoughtfully and carefully selected nineteenth and twentieth century prints, principally of the French, English, and American schools, and representative of their foremost graphic artists. Numbered amongst these are four mezzotints by perhaps the greatest English exponent of the medium, David Lucas, a rare and remarkable craftsman, whose work is prized by collectors and connoisseurs alike, but who has not been generally appreciated in this country to the full extent of his merits.

In speaking of Lucas, William M. Ivins, Jr.,¹ has this to say: "Constable, gifted



SALISBURY CATHEDRAL FROM THE MEADOW
BY DAVID LUCAS, ENGLISH, 1802-1881
Gift of C. Edmund Delbos, 1947

with none of Turner's tricky virtuosity, and never pitting himself against the men of the past at their own games, by his innate simplicity and honesty discovered so many things that had not been known before that he became the greatest influence in landscape painting between Rubens and Cézanne. Luck brought to him David Lucas (1802-1881), a mezzotint engraver, and between them they produced the most extraordinary series of landscape prints since Rubens. In them the mezzotint gave its last and its most brilliant flare."

Lucas was the son of a grazier and was discovered accidentally by S. W. Reynolds, who apprenticed him in 1823. After executing a few early plates of minor importance, he met with Constable in 1829 and turned to the great task of interpreting a part of the corpus of the master's landscape work. In 1833, as a result of their joint efforts, Lucas published the *Various Views of Landscape*, the individual prints bearing dates between 1828 and 1832 and combining twenty-two plates of consummate brilliance in the luminosity with which Constable's atmospheric effects are rendered. *Glebe Farm*² (sometimes known as *Castle Acre Priory*, of 1832), in the impression of superb quality presented to the Museum by Mr. Delbos, is one of the most arresting plates in the series and stands as an excellent example of the coarse-grain technique which Lucas employed when it was necessary to interpret thick patches of dark and dense foliage and ponderous foregrounds. A similar mezzotint is the equally powerful print from the same series entitled *Mill Stream*³ which, like the preceding, is represented in Mr. Delbos' gift in an extraordinarily fine proof before the first published state.

In 1846, Lucas launched a second publication of mezzotints after paintings by Constable, the *New Series of Engravings of English Landscape*. From this series, Mr. Delbos has enriched the print collection with two of the finest possible impressions of *Salisbury Cathedral from the Meadows* (1837) in early trial states without⁴ and with⁵ the addition of the double rainbow. These scarce and very beautiful early proofs in later finished states resulted in failure where Lucas found it expedient, unfortunately, to superimpose etching upon the pure mezzotint in which the two museum impressions are executed.

David Lucas was the last of the reproductive mezzotinters preceding the introduction of photogravure. He was a highly conscientious and sensitive interpreter of Constable's paintings, unsurpassed as a stylist of extraordinary ability. Not a literal translator of his master's oils, Lucas happily embodied in mezzotint engraving, than which there is no better medium to express the glittering subtleties and propensities of light and shadow, an exceptional creative originality which stamps his graphic work as a thoroughly individual and personal art.

JOHN S. NEWBERRY, JR.

¹William M. Ivins, Jr., *Notes on Prints*, New York, 1930.

²Acc. no. 47.379. Height 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ inches; width 10 inches. Gift of C. Edmund Delbos.

³Acc. no. 47.357. Height 7 inches; width 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Gift of C. Edmund Delbos.

⁴Acc. no. 47.380. Height 7 inches; width 10 inches. Gift of C. Edmund Delbos.

⁵Acc. no. 47.381. Height 7 inches; width 10 inches. Gift of C. Edmund Delbos.

TWO BAROQUE TABLES

Certain works of art, reflecting more than others the age during which they were created and the society for which they were made, help us to understand both better. To that category, so essential to the collections of all great museums, belong an important pair of eighteenth century Italian tables, recently offered to the Institute by two thoughtful and generous friends, Mr. and Mrs. Leslie H. Green.

Used as we are to the simplicity of line of Chippendale furniture, or to the usually restrained marquetry or dark woods of the French and English *ébénistes*, these elaborately painted and carved tables may at first seem strange to us; and indeed, to be fully appreciated they must be replaced in imagination in the setting for which they were made. Many of us have seen these enormous Roman palazzos slumbering in the warm side streets of Via di Borgo Nuovo or the Corso, their windows tightly closed, their awnings hanging damply over deserted stone balconies. Uncompromising dignity, surly severity are the characteristics of these endless façades. But once the visitor enters the reception rooms of the second floor, everything changes. The doors of gilded and painted woods are framed with colored marble slabs or stucco caryatids; from floor to ceiling the walls are covered with paintings and red or yellow damask, brightened by painted or engraved mirrors in heavy gold borders and gilded *torchères* hanging at intervals. The plaster of the high ceilings is hidden under frescoes painted by great decorators who did not



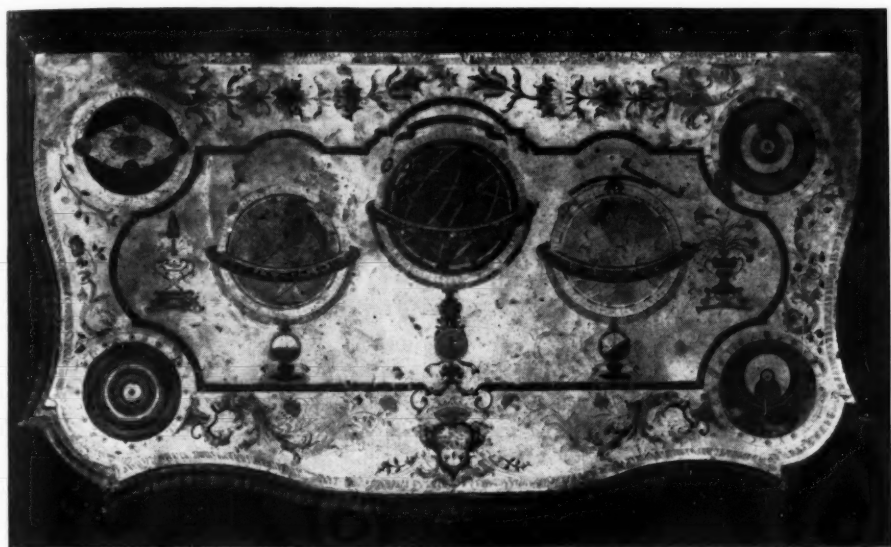
CONSOLE TABLE (ONE OF A PAIR), ITALIAN, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie H. Green, 1947

believe that art needed to be more than splendid decoration. Everywhere there is color, overwhelming sumptuousness and spaciousness. Doubtless our tables were once in such a room, entrance hall or private study of a Roman nobleman.

Even in the eighteenth century there was little furniture in such palaces. A few benches or stools, a few armchairs, one or two chests, one or two tables were considered sufficient to furnish a state *salone* or a ball room. The most characteristic pieces of Italian furniture during the Baroque period were console tables such as those illustrated here. Far longer than the rest, such consoles remained an integral part of the architectural scheme. They belonged to the wall against which they were leaning and gave essential accents to a symphony of colors composed as carefully as a Porpora sonata or a Marcello cantata. Great artists such as Piranesi himself, a generation or two later, ignoring the distinction that we make today between "major" and "minor" arts, designed them and gave them monumental dignity.

The most unusual feature of the Institute's tables is their tops, which were made, not of marble or painted wood, as one might expect, but of scagliola, a composition prepared from gypsum, glue and powdered marble. Once it was finely ground and polished scagliola imitated, and in a way improved upon, the rarest marbles. More important, the scagliola technique facilitated the decoration of the smooth surfaces, which were usually painted and incised with coats-of-arms and other designs. The tops of our tables are decorated with what are probably the most intricate of these designs: they represent different astronomical systems—the Universe according to Ptolemy, the Universe according to Copernicus. Of the correctness of the designs I shall not speak here; but while such a decoration might easily have become dry and pedantic, it was made beautiful by the craftsman who created it. Garlands of flowers matching in colors the flowers of the wooden frames, baroque vases overflowing with carnations, scrolls of variegated hues, surround the planispheres and maps of heaven, and remind us that in the eighteenth century of the painted *montgolfières*, Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* and Newtonian treatises written by charming women, everything was a pretext for creating beauty. Part of the inscription remains, less correct apparently than the artist's conception of the heavens. It reads: "... EX PRAESCRIPTO A. ET M.D.D. FRANCISCI FONTANELLA VINCENTIUS SARACENO OPIFEX SCULPSIT ET COLORAVIT ISTAM ET ALTERAM MARMOROSAM LAPIDEM ET . . .". This is hardly Ciceronian Latin; but Vincentius Saraceno had other talents.

Our two console tables, the only ones of their kind in America, I believe, and of a type rare even in Italy, represent Baroque craftsmanship at its peak. They are built better than most Italian furniture of the period, which too often hides poor construction and soft wood under gesso and paint. Their S-shaped legs are cleverly re-enforced at the weakest points of the curves by scrolls and flowers and have the easy solidity of Bernini's *bozzetti*. The deep cutting, treated as if the wood were stone, creates strong contrasts of reliefs and shadows which are typical of Roman exuberance and terribilità. Powerful as the carving is, it would have lost some of its effect without some discreet polychromy. Our pieces are indeed a subtle com-



TOP OF CONSOLE TABLE, ITALIAN, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie H. Green, 1947

bination of sculpture and painting, in which the colors, soft pinks, soft yellows, greens and blues, are to the restless curves and the carving of the stylized shells and grotesque masks what the airs of Paisiello or Scarlatti are to the dramas of Metastasio: they justify them and enhance their beauty.

PAUL L. GRIGAUT

Acc. nos. 47.182 and 47.183. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie H. Green, 1947. Height 33½ inches; width 48½ inches; depth 28 inches. The most valuable article on scagliola technique is: M. Jourdain, "Marble and Scagliola Tops," *Apollo*, V, 1927, pp. 208-210.

THE STRATTON COLLECTION

The photograph of the J. Sparling Company Store, Woodward and State Street, is one of a large group of architectural drawings, photographs, tracings, sketch-books, and scrapbooks preserved by William Buck Stratton (1865-1938) and recently presented to the Museum by Mrs. Mary Chase Stratton. Erected in 1906, the Sparling Store remains one of the best commercial structures in the city and demonstrates the great originality and vitality of Mr. Stratton's architecture. It is a remarkable design of fine space divisions, well related details and pleasing proportions. The complete lack of unnecessary eclectic detail and the unusual window treatment foreshadow the design and interesting textural contrasts in materials of later architecture. Detroit in the early years of the century was confronted with a



J. SPARLING COMPANY STORE, 1906
BY WILLIAM BUCK STRATTON, AMERICAN, 1865-1938

growing industrialization and the rapid change from a relatively small city to a large metropolis. One of the immediate problems was the building activity made necessary by new industries and an influx of workers attracted to the city. Architectural standards, already affected by the new machine-made ornament, were rapidly sinking beneath a renewed eclecticism. In the midst of this confusion a small group of Detroiters attempted to point the way to honest craftsmanship and sound design. To this group belonged William Buck Stratton who, as a recent Cornell graduate, had come to Detroit in 1889. In his work one finds a strong feeling for natural materials, clear-cut forms and space, at a time when little regard was given to the human side of architecture.

From his close contact with the Pewabic Pottery and its founders, Horace Caulkins and Mary Chase Perry, later Mrs. Stratton, Mr. Stratton developed a deep interest in ceramics which greatly affected his architectural style. Ceramic screens, brightly colored decorative tiles and other bits of ceramic wares added warmth and textural interest to his fine handling of brick and stone.

During his long residence in Detroit, Mr. Stratton took an active part in the civic affairs of the city. His scrapbooks include one devoted to *Civic Development of Detroit*, in which are preserved newspaper clippings and notices from local and

national newspapers pertaining to new construction methods, city planning and housing—projected improvements which are still being discussed today.

The many interests which occupied the inquiring mind of William Stratton are well represented in the present collection, which will be incorporated in the architectural archives in the Museum Library. A collection, such as this one, of an architect's working drawings and sketches is extremely rare and Mrs. Stratton is to be complimented on the care and time she devoted to the preservation of this material. It will be of great assistance to the architectural student and historian exploring the building history of the city.

WILLIAM E. WOOLFENDEN

AN AMERICAN SIDEBOARD

An unusual sideboard given to the Detroit Institute of Arts in memory of Miss Nell Tower of Greenville, Michigan, presents problems similar to those of a detective in a modern mystery story. Who did it? When? And where? There are a number of clues, but so far these clues have not answered all the questions.

If this sideboard had not been a family heirloom; if it were not unusual in proportion and in decorative motifs such as the ship and columns surmounted by globes, one would simply have written, "a fine sideboard in the Sheraton-Hepplewhite tradition of about 1795."

Usually if a piece is a family heirloom its origin may be traced even if some of the family traditions about it tend to be legendary. Our sideboard was purchased by Miss Tower from a member of the Johnston family who lived on a farm near Greenville. Though an heirloom it had been relegated to the barn, used as a tool chest, and painted red. Miss Tower had the sideboard restored by an old Danish cabinet-maker in Greenville, who did a remarkable job of matching some of the inlay and mahogany veneer.

The Johnston family recollections about the sideboard, published in the Greenville paper and by a Greenville furniture store, at the time of Miss Tower's death, include: "made in France", "made in England", "purchased in Madeira—for the bride of a young American ship captain who settled in Baltimore, Maryland." But the Johnston family has dispersed, and so far genealogical investigation has given no further clues.

The ship which decorates the center door is a clue to the date of the cabinet, for it flies an American flag with 15 stars. Though Kentucky became the fifteenth state in 1792, it was not until 1795 that the American flag consistently had a field of 15 stars. Consequently, the sideboard could not have been made earlier, and the general style of the piece would indicate a date not much later than 1800.

Though clipper ships frequently decorated Chinese export porcelain and occasionally American glass, I have so far found no other example of a ship design inlaid in furniture. Ship captains of the early Republic frequently commissioned

portraits painted of their ships and their ships decorated their Chinese punch bowls, so perhaps the family legend of a ship captain ancestor is true.

However, the sideboard was obviously made in America rather than England. Not only is the American ship an indication of this, but also the use of pine as a base for the mahogany veneer. The mention of Baltimore in the family tradition led to an investigation of Baltimore sideboards, but ours bears no resemblance to Baltimore furniture. The most exciting clue on the origin of this piece was the discovery of a similar sideboard in the collection of C. Sanford Bull of Middlebury, Connecticut, published in the June, 1932, issue of the magazine *Antiques*. Although Mr. Bull's sideboard has a rectangular rather than square center section, and double doors rather than a single door in the center, it possesses the same type of proportions as ours (a small part of the legs in our example has been cut off). The serpentine front with recessed center door is identical. And, like ours, Mr. Bull's sideboard is unorthodox in decorative details. Instead of a ship and urns on the side doors, a star in a circle decorates each of its four doors. The rest of the designs, the oval fan, the bell flower drop on the legs, etc., are identical, and in various arrangement may be found in other pieces of the Sheraton-Hepplewhite tradition. The column supporting the globe is also identical. It is so unusual that, with the stars, it led to the publication of Mr. Bull's piece as evidence of the existence of Masonic symbolism in furniture design.

In the article Mr. Bull's sideboard was referred to as Connecticut in origin. If this is true, then certainly ours is also a Connecticut piece, for both pieces must be the work of the same cabinet-maker. But here again the clue is elusive. Homer Eaton Keyes, editor of *Antiques* at that time and author of the article, gave no reason in the text for Connecticut as the place of origin. Mr. Keyes is no longer living. Mr. Bull does not know his reason for the attribution.



SIDEBOARD, AMERICAN, LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
Gift of Miss Grace Tower in Memory of Miss Nell Tower, 1946

So far we can say that our clues have led us to only two definite facts: the use of pine is American, the flag cannot be earlier than 1792, probably not earlier than 1795. But these meagre facts are surrounded by romantic suggestions of a ship captain and his bride, later of a trek from a sophisticated center along the Atlantic coast to a simple Michigan farm where later generations lost all appreciation of one of the finest examples of cabinet work of our early Republic. The two sideboards are obviously the work of a highly skilled, imaginative, and distinctive craftsman. Perhaps some day a new clue, or the discovery of a documented piece, will lead to our knowledge of this man's identity, adding another chapter to the knowledge of our cultural heritage and helping us to write the final chapter to this "mystery story".

JOYCE BLACK GNAU

Acc. no. 46.286. Height $37\frac{3}{8}$ inches, length $66\frac{1}{2}$ inches; depth $26\frac{3}{8}$ inches. Gift of Miss Grace Tower in memory of Miss Nell Tower, 1946.

THREE NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICAN WATER COLORISTS

Although water color is one of the most popular and expressive of painting media today, in the early nineteenth century American artists thought it fit only for amateurs and not at all adaptable to serious painting. It was first used professionally by illustrators to heighten the effects of their drawings, in which they were primarily interested. The first glimmering and the growing awareness among American artists of the great possibilities of the medium are shown in a group of three water colors recently given to the Museum.

Felix Octavius Carr Darley (1822-1888) was one of the most successful of these early professionals. In his youth, as an apprentice in a mercantile house, Darley used drawing as an escape from his menial tasks, but his contributions to the *Pictorial Journal* grew so popular that he decided to devote himself to a career of illustration. Darley's aptitude for characterization—sometimes bordering on caricature—and his sincere interest in everyday life made him the inevitable illustrator of the books of Cooper, Irving, and Hawthorne. The new American literature found its visual counterpart in Darley's drawings, and his lively vignettes of the American scene were to be seen on such things as Federal bank-notes. He also drew an admirable series of illustrations for an American edition of the works of Charles Dickens. His *Feeding the Horse*¹ in the Museum collection is clearly illustrational, but it shows, just as clearly, his strength as a draughtsman and the sympathetic, homely characteristics that made him a prime delineator of his time.

*Late for School*² supplies the Museum collection with a work by another popular nineteenth century illustrator, Edward Lamson Henry (1841-1919). Henry was a painter rather than a book illustrator but his pictures are full of anecdote and local scene interest, and depict the manners and milieu of the people of eighteenth and nineteenth century America. Born in Charleston and later moving to New York,

Henry knew well the life of both North and South; unlike Darley, he traveled widely in Europe. Although he studied with Courbet in Paris and admired Meissonier, the European exposure came too late to influence greatly his style or outlook; he seldom deviated from his original subject-matter, and apparently never used any style other than the one in which he first began to paint. As shown in *Late for School*, Henry used water color in a role that is subservient to that of his drawing and delighted in meticulously painted illustrational detail.

John La Farge (1835-1910), one of the great figures in American decorative painting of the last century, began to use water color in a new way, with greater freedom and brilliance. He spent much of his young manhood in Europe; in Paris, at the home of the Saint-Victors, he met the great men of his day: Gautier, Baudelaire, Ingres, Delacroix, *et al.* Finally, at the age of twenty-nine, when he decided upon an artistic career for himself, La Farge had become truly international in his viewpoint; freed from the limitations of nation and period, his acute mind was stimulated to experimental activity by the varied talents with which he had come in contact. He first began to paint seriously in the studio of William Morris Hunt who encouraged him to continue. La Farge often used water color, transparent and opaque together, as a study medium for some of his larger compositions, and, in



FEEDING THE HORSE
BY FELIX OCTAVIUS DARLEY, AMERICAN (1822-1888)
Gift of the Founders Society, Merrill Fund, 1947



LATE FOR SCHOOL

BY EDWARD LAMSON HENRY, AMERICAN, 1841-1919
 Gift of the Founders Society, D. M. Ferry, Jr., Fund, 1945

effects of color and light, anticipated some of the principles of Impressionism. Because the light reflected by the white paper sparkles through the transparent color, he found the medium particularly appropriate to studies for stained glass windows, which were one of his special interests. The small water color in the Museum collection³ (illustrated p. 94) is a study for a window design entitled *Spring* which was later completed for the Westbury, Long Island, home of William C. Whitney.⁴ Much of La Farge's best work is found in his windows and murals for churches (the latter, notably for the Church of the Ascension in New York City), but in none of them does his talent as a decorator obscure the emotional power and sincerity of his designs.

A. F. PAGE

¹Acc. no. 47.78. Height 12 inches; width $9\frac{7}{16}$ inches (arched). Gift of the Founders Society, Merrill Fund.

²Acc. no. 45.82. Height 16 inches; width $13\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Gift of the Founders Society, D. M. Ferry, Jr., Fund.

³Acc. no. 47.77. Height $7\frac{1}{4}$ inches; width $5\frac{1}{16}$ inches. Gift of the Founders Society, Merrill Fund.

⁴The completed window is illustrated in "John La Farge, Our Only Old Master", *Current Literature*, vol. 50, 1911, pp. 93-6.



SPRING

BY JOHN LA FARGE, AMERICAN, 1835-1910
Gift of the Founders Society, Merrill Fund, 1947

ZOFFANY'S LOVE IN A VILLAGE
 OR
 "THE CHEARFUL MAN'S A KING"

Most English plays of the Georgian era are notoriously tiresome to read; and, to unimaginative students at least, none are duller and harder to enjoy than eighteenth century comic operas or—as they are variously known from somewhat subtle differences which become of great interest in English seminars early in June—ballad operas, English operas, Newgate pastorals or lyrical dramas. I know, however, of two exceptions: "that prodigy of fortune" and masterpiece of the genre, John Gay's very successful *Beggar's Opera*, and, not too far behind it in fame and charm, Bickerstaffe's *Love in a Village*. The two plays have a great deal in common. Both are "musical entertainments," a mixture of spoken prose and of ballads which were sung by "the sweetest voices on the English stage," Lavinia Fenton's and Mrs. Abington's. Both are the product, not of one mind—Gay's or Bickerstaffe's, but the result of a complicated collaboration. In the creation of the *Beggar's Opera* Gay apparently was helped by an impressive trio composed of Pope, Swift and

Arbuthnot; while, to bring *Love in a Village* into being, Bickerstaffe, who was very good at borrowing plots all through his short and prolific life as a dramatist, "lifted" the intrigues of Marivaux' *Jeu de l'amour et du hasard*, Wycherley's *Gentleman Dancing-Master*, Charles Johnson's *Village Opera* and, Dibdin adds, "two or three other things." Finally both plays were given a corporeal existence by the painters best fitted to interpret them: Hogarth, the most insular of British artists, immortalized the *Beggar's Opera* in a painting later engraved by, of all people, William Blake; and John Zoffany, in his work at least the most English of all the foreign painters living in London, painted *Love in a Village*. I do not know where Hogarth's painting is presently; but *Love in a Village*, as fresh and gay as it was when Garrick, its first owner, hung it in his home, is now one of the most delightful paintings in the Institute's English gallery.

Zoffany's *Love in a Village* is par excellence a narrative picture. To appreciate it fully it is necessary to know something of the plot of Bickerstaffe's masterpiece, which is full of elaborate misunderstandings, disguises, reconciliations and, unfortunately, lengthy and ponderous digressions. We should be grateful to the painter, therefore, that he chose to represent one of the first scenes of the opera, before things had time to get out of hand. As an old advertisement declared, "This piece is founded upon RURAL LIFE and rural unacquaintance with the depravity of a metropolis." The action takes place in a hall in Justice Woodcock's house, "somewhere in the country." Master Hawthorn, the Justice's neighbor, has come back from hunting; full of *joie de vivre*, seizing upon the flimsiest of pretexts, he has just praised sports and sportsmen and, while a servant listens slyly, has just been rebuked for his levity by Justice Woodcock (whom we already know from a good source, however, as a "wicked" old man who follows young women about the house "like a tame goat"). Master Hawthorn will never get rich that way, Polonius-Woodcock has retorted; he should not laugh so much; he should be taught to be more sedate. Upon which Hawthorn-Polonius, answering: "Health, good humor and competence is my motto; and if my executors have a mind, they are welcome to make it my epitaph," strikes the conventional attitude of the operatic tenor, and starts singing one of the ballads (music by Festing) that made the opera the great success it was:

"The honest heart, whose thought is clear
From fraud, disguise and guile
Need neither fortune's frowning fear
Nor court the harlot's smile.
The greatness that would make us grave
Is but an empty thing.
What more than mirth would mortals have?
The CHEARFUL man's a king."

Which is all very true. But such a scene is hardly dramatic—and there are many more of the kind. We must agree with Dibdin that here, and throughout the rest of *Love in a Village*, nothing could be more puerile than the dialogue, and with the anonymous critic of the *New York Magazine* (December, 1794),

that "the plots are too numerous and the higher characters destitute of any striking discrimination." Then, why did the play have such an enormous success? One answer, I believe, we may find in Zoffany's version of that scene. Notwithstanding Marivaux' slender plot, *Love in a Village* is a purely English play, with English names and an English story, of the type, as Garrick says, that "lapped around the very hearts of an English audience." And both in the play and the painting—an epitome of life in a small squire's home—we find what made life in the Island so pleasant under the Georges. All that gentlemen should like is here: hunting, symbolized by the fowling piece and the net of birds on the table; animals, with the setter who fills so nicely the awkward space between the other characters; comfort, in the guise of the robust old-fashioned wing chair with its goose feathered cushion, the finest bit of still-life in the picture; respect for ancient tradition and solid art—witness the *Judgment of Solomon* delineated for the Justice of the Peace by some provincial Thornhill or itinerant Amigoni, and that other Hogarthian touch, the ample and *démodé* wig on the old man's bald head. Zoffany, it is well known, had no imagination: I do not doubt that he copied faithfully, for our delight, everything that we see in his dramatic conversation piece.

In Bickerstaffe's play there is, however, something no painting can recreate, but which, in the eighteenth century London of Handel and Johann Christian Bach, must have accounted for a great part of its success. Some of the most charming music of the period gives *Love in a Village* whatever renown it still enjoys today. From the first bars of the overture by C. F. Abel (Gainsborough's patron, whose walls were covered with drawings by his friend) to the last words of the opera—"Fiddlers strike up," appropriately—there is music, clever, entertaining, often beautiful and subtle. Not all the forty-three airs are original; as usual in ballad operas, whose composers were as unscrupulous as the authors, a number of the lyrics are adapted to famous compositions. But the songs were well chosen and the adapters excellent musicians. Even the celebrated Dr. Arne, the creator of *Rule Britannia* and *Where the Bee Sucks*, and the composer of one of the great English operas, *Artaxerxes*, consented to lend what his contemporaries called his capital genius to the elaboration of *Love in a Village*: half of the airs are his. No wonder that the opera, first produced late in 1762 at the Theater Royal, Covent Garden, turned "the scales of approbation in favor of Covent Garden, against Garrick's Drury Lane": one night the cash receipt at the latter theater, though the great Roscius, Garrick himself, and Mrs. Cibber performed in the same play, was 3 l. 15 s. 6 d. The charm of the music may also explain why *Love in a Village* was so successful in the eighteenth century all through the English speaking world; from Calcutta to Kingston, Jamaica, and from Newport, Rhode Island, to Philadelphia (where it was staged in 1767, barely five years after being produced in London), everybody, or almost everybody, saw the play and sang its airs.

For the Englishman of the 1760's who saw Zoffany's conversation piece in Garrick's home, Justice Woodcock, Hawthorn, Hodge the villainous servant, were human beings, actors whose "counterfeit presentments" they could compare with the originals. Little is known about Dunstall, who played the part of the Justice's



LOVE IN A VILLAGE
BY JOHN ZOFFANY, ENGLISH, 1733-1810
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb, 1947

manservant. But John Beard (Master Hawthorn) and Edward Shuter (Woodcock) were two great actors, about whom a great deal could be written. The latter was a "theatrical wonder" whom Garrick considered the greatest comical genius he had ever known. He had only two faults: he was indolent and, as people euphemized then, he was "careless of his constitution"—that is, he drank too much, even according to the standards of Dr. S I J n's contemporaries. It is fitting, therefore, that the last part he ever played, a few days before his death, should have been Falstaff. John Beard, the Hawthorn of *Love in a Village*, was an excellent singer, for whom Handel composed some of his greatest tenor parts. After his first wife's death (she was the daughter of James, first Earl of Waldegrave) he became the son-in-law of John Rich, the manager of Covent Garden and producer of Gay's *Beggar's Opera* (the play, eighteenth century wits said, which made Rich gay and Gay rich), and succeeded him. Looking at him in Zoffany's picture, "a man universally beloved for his amiable qualities," we can well believe that he was the jolly president of the Beefsteak Club.

With these diverse elements—this theatrical scene, of a kind which was con-

genial to Zoffany and brought him fame; these men, who were the painter's friends; this English "climate"—Zoffany painted a picture possessing the quality which above all others the eighteenth century asked from its artists: the ability to please.

Such an aim gives our *Love in a Village* its limitations. There is no great depth of feeling, no intention to convey elevated thoughts; we cannot expect to find here what we, spectators of today, are so often looking for in a work of art—a pictorial translation of the artist's personality. The value of Zoffany's works lies elsewhere, in "the dramatic relationship he establishes between the characters," the subtlety and completeness of his observation, and at times even, as in our conversation piece, in the insight the painter gives us into the minds of these complicated human beings, the actors. In *Love in a Village* Zoffany, the contemporary of Sterne and Fielding, did more than depict a fictitious Justice of the Peace or an unreal *raisonneur*. Behind the masks of the actors, we see the actors themselves: John Beard in the ageless attitude of the tenor, with half an eye on the orchestra, his raised finger pointing vaguely at some non-existent object or subtly begging for applause, while Dunstall and Shuter, respectful and motionless as in a movie still, are waiting intently for their cue. Such painting, which could easily have degenerated into a Rowlandson *caricatura*, is realism of a high order.

These are literary qualities. There are others in our *Love in a Village*, for its painter was an excellent artist. Zoffany has often been compared to the Dutch and Flemish masters of the seventeenth century. In the glossy perfection of his glazes, in his thorough knowledge of the painter's craft, and sometimes also in a certain hardness of contours and patient insistence on irrelevant details, he is closer still to certain *petits maîtres* of provincial Germany such as Denner or Ziesenis, or expatriates working, as Horemans did, in small Bavarian or Palatinate courts. But, while these honest craftsmen copied the superficial characteristics of a Holbein or a Dürer, relished in *trompe-l'œil* effects, and were too often uninspired and tactless, Zoffany knew that the greater art is that which makes us forget art; there is no obvious bravura in *Love in a Village*, no lapse of taste, but a perfect *métier*, a great regard for actual truth, and a refined sense of color. The hues are subdued, silvery-grays, soft blues and soft olive greens predominating, while here and there, in the brick red of the table cover, the purple of the pheasant's head repeated in the plumet of the warrior in the biblical scene, even in the black of Hawthorn's tricorne, somewhat stronger accents are introduced.

Love in a Village, a recent gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb to the Institute, is one of these perfect paintings which deserve a place of honor in a public gallery, and which at the same time possess an elusive charm, an intimate and restful quality that make them works of art one would like to own; they would soon become in one's home like discreet and unobtrusive old relatives to whom casual visitors may not pay much attention, but whose presence unconsciously bring repose and contentment. This is no small compliment.

PAUL L. GRIGAUT

Acc. no. 47.398. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edgar B. Whitcomb. Canvas. Height 40 inches; width 50 inches. Collections: David Garrick in 1767 (?); John Acton Garle, Esq., Chipstead, Surrey. This, or another, version of *Love in a Village*, is mentioned in the Zoffany sale catalogue (May 9, 1811), no. 97; see Lady Diana Manners and G. C. Williamson, *John Zoffany, R.A.*, London, 1920, p. 292. A version of *Love in a Village* is, or was, in the Yarborough collection; in that version, instead of *The Judgment of Solomon*, the painting on the wall, according to Manners and Williamson (p. 246), represents the children of James I. A mezzotint of *Love in a Village* by Finlayson was published in 1768; although Manners and Williamson, who reproduce it (fac. p. 16), state that "The original painting belongs to the Earl of Yarborough", the scene reproduced in the background represents *The Judgment of Solomon*. There are other discrepancies in the mentions made of the different versions or replicas of *Love in a Village* in the Manners-Williamson book. I am indebted to the Frick Library for access to much of the material used in this article, as well as to its staff, whose help, as usual, was invaluable.

MARINE STILL LIFE by ZOLTAN SEPESHY

In last autumn's top-ranking exhibition of United States art of 1947, which was held at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Institute, the first prize of \$1500 went to Zoltan Sepeshy for his *Marine Still Life*. Equally gratifying to Detroiters is the news that the picture, a scene at Frankfort, Michigan, has been added to the permanent collection of the Institute through the generosity of Dr. and Mrs. George Kamperman.



MARINE STILL LIFE

BY ZOLTAN SEPESHY, AMERICAN, CONTEMPORARY

Gift of Dr. and Mrs. George Kamperman, 1948

Well-known as artist and teacher at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, Sepeshy has come to know intimately almost every part of Michigan. In referring to his work for the Michigan On Canvas project, Sepeshy remarked:

"For many years Michigan has meant for me the blue lakes, the sand, the driftwood, the fishing nets, the boats of all sorts and sizes—the water that surrounds the State. This is Michigan on its periphery, but it is the distinctive Michigan that I have sought summer after summer."

Marine Still Life was painted completely in the studio from many drawings, notes and water color sketches made at Frankfort. The phases of the exacting sessions spent on the painting may be followed in a series of four reproductions in the book on tempera painting recently written by Mr. Sepeshy. These reproductions show the development of the picture from the first sketch after transfer to the masonite board, through stages of underpainting and reworking, to the final, meticulously organized painting.

Mr. Sepeshy gives us in *Marine Still Life* an acutely observed and realistic, yet sensitively felt reaction to a tangle of anchors, curving hulls of boats, buoys and gear at the end of a wharf at Frankfort on Lake Michigan. Fresh blues and greens are beautifully related to warm browns and crimsons. The clear whites, and lights reflected from them, are not opaque pigments added outwardly, but reveal the carefully prepared panel itself gleaming through transparent, superimposed layers. The tempera colors, mixed with egg, are pure and luminous, allowing each new layer of color to show the one beneath, down to the basic design. Color blending is further aided by extremely fine cross-hatching.

Architectural forms, the shadows cast by them, and textures of wood, concrete and rope, are all rendered with such clarity and precision as to call to mind an observation made in *The American Scene* by Henry James:

"The American air . . . lends a felicity to all the exactitudes of architecture and sculpture, favors sharp effects, disengages differences, preserves lights, defines projected shadows."

Mr. Sepeshy's own comment on *Marine Still Life* was that it was not an attempt, like the Impressionists, to depict a fleeting, ephemeral aspect of nature, whether a day of brilliant sunshine or of gray fog, but rather to delineate a day which could serve as a summary of many days of that region,—a calm, serene one characteristic of the climate of our northern woods. And the artist added he had tried to give a cross-section of the very feel of a summer day, capturing something of its fragrance, tonality, texture and fiber.

ELIZABETH H. PAYNE

Acc. no. 48.2. Gift of Dr. and Mrs. George Kamperman. Tempera on masonite panel. Height 30 inches; width 38 inches.

THIS IS THE END OF VOLUME XXVII

